DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 291 730 SP 029 993

AUTHOR Collins, Peggy Hooten; Toppins, Anne Davis
TITLE Personality Strengths that Influence Teachers Pursuit of Leadership Roles: A Comparative Bi/Polar Study.
PUB DATE 13 Nov 87
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (Mobile, AL, November 11-13, 1987).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; Individual Differences; *Leadership Qualities; Personality Measures; *Personality Traits; *Teacher Characteristics; *Teacher Motivation

ABSTRACT

This study examined personality differences between teachers who performed additional leadership tasks and teachers who, though equally qualified and eligible for such tasks, chose not to apply for leadership roles. Subjects of the study were 60 teachers in the leader's group and 80 in the non-leaders group. The Bi/Polar Inventory of Core Strengths, a self-rated inventory scale of pairs of opposite nouns or adjectives, was administered to the subjects, and a Demography Data form was also completed. The Bi/Polar items were designed to indicate personality strengths related to thinking, risking, practical thinking, theoretical thinking, dependent risking, and independent risking. Lead strengths were determined and one of eight core patterns was specified as the individual's core pattern. Demographic data collected related to age, sex, years of experience, highest degree held, and teaching position. Lead strength and dominance was found in some categories, but based upon procedures and instruments used, no significant difference was found between leaders and non-leaders. Motivation for pursuit of leadership roles was not linked to a particular personality core strength. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED291730

Personality Strengths that Influence Teachers Pursuit of Leadership Roles:

A Comparative Bi/Polar Study

Peggy Hooten Collins
Tuscaloosa City Schools
1100 21st Street East
Tuscaloosa, Alabama
35405

Anne Davis Toppins
University of Alabama
Post Office Box Q
Tuscaloosa, Alabama
35487

Presented at the
1987 Annual Mid-South Educational Research Meeting
Mobile, Alabama
November 13, 1987

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

P. H. Collins

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

SP 029 993

ABSTRACT

Personality Strengths that Influence Teachers' Pursuit of Leadership Roles: A Comparative Bi/Polar Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the personality differences between teachers who perform additional leadership tasks and teachers who do not. The first group (leaders) was composed of teachers who had chosen to accept leadership positions, as defined by the Academic Incentive Program of a city school system, while maintaining fulltime teacher status and responsibilities. The second group (nonleaders) was composed of teachers in the same school system, who were equally as qualified and eligible to apply for the leadership positions, but who had chosen not to seek the specified leadership roles. Similarities and differences of these two groups were studied to determine if there were traits distinctive to each group that might provide evidence of motivation for roles.

Instruments used for data collection were the Bi/Polar Inventory of Core Strengths instrument and a researcher-developed Demographic Data form. The Bi/Polar instrument was a self-rated inventory scale of pairs of polar opposites. There was a seven-point range for each of the 45 pairs of opposite nouns or adjectives. The Bi/Polar items were designed to indicate personality strengths related to thinking, risking, practical thinking, theoretical thinking, dependent risking and independent risking. Lead strengths were determined and one of eight core patterns was specified as the individual's core pattern. Demographic data collected related to age, sex, years of experience, highest degree held, and teaching position.

The selected sample consisted of 60 in the leaders' group and 80 in the nonleaders' group. Teachers in elementary, middle, and secondary schools were represented. One hundred twenty-nine usable packets were returned.

A t-Test procedure was the statistical analysis employed to examine the data. The personality core strengths of leaders and nonleaders were analyzed in the categories listed above. No significant difference was found between leaders and nonleaders in any of the seven hypotheses tested.

Lead strength dominance was found in some categories, but based upon procedures and instruments used, the results of this study failed to indicate that there were statistically significant personality core strength differences in the teachers who served in leadership roles and those who did not choose to serve in these roles. Motivation for pursuit of leadership roles was not linked to a particular personality core strength.

Personality Strengths that Influence Teachers' Pursuit of Leadership Roles: A Comparative Bi/Polar Study

At the beginning of our nation's development, Thomas Jefferson stated that, as a country, we were sorely lacking citizens who could assume leadership roles, and that it was the function of educational institutions to prepare citizens to assume leadership positions (Lee, 1964). In our rapidly changing world, the same cry was voiced in many political areas and professional fields. In education the cry was heard and there has been a constant search for those who can, and will, fulfill leadership roles and lead toward educational excellence. Some felt that "with the right kind of leadership we can survive and even prosper. . . . Leadership can, in fact, lend stability and productivity to educational institutions (Cunningham, 1985, p. 17)."

Problem

Classroom teachers are leaders. They lead and direct groups of children daily, but many of these teachers choose not to lead other adults or function in leadership positions outside their classrooms. Others seek to be active in leading school committees, seek administrative and supervisory positions, and encourage change for improvement in the academic setting. There seems to be a difference in motivation or leadership aspiration in these two groups of teachers.

Subjects

The purpose of this investigation was to determine the personality core strengths or traits of the teachers in both groups. An investigation was made of similarities and differences in order to determine if there were traits distinctive to each group that might provide evidence related to motivation for the pursuit of leadership roles.

This study investigated the personality core strengths of two groups of teachers employed by the Tuscaloosa City School System. The first group was composed of teachers who had chosen leadership positions, as defined by the Academic Incentive Program of the Tuscaloosa City School System, while maintaining fulltime teacher status and responsibilities. This group of leaders was referred to as participants in this study.

The second group in the study was composed of teachers equally as eligible to apply for the leadership positions of the Academic Incentive Program of the Tuscaloosa City School System, but who had chosen not to seek the leadership roles. In this study, this group of nonleaders was referred to as nonparticipants.

Method

The Bi/Polar Inventory of Core Strengths instrument was used to collect data related to personality core strengths. The Bi/Polar Inventory of Core Strengths instrument was found to be an instrument which could be used to assess core lead strengths of any individual, leader or nonleader. The analysis report provided information related to personality patterns. The two basic strengths were thinking and risking. Each person assessed with this instrument was found to lead with one of these characteristics. The two thinking strengths were practical and theoretical, and the two risking strengths were dependent and independent.

Each study subject was asked to rate himself or herself on this inventory scale which consisted of pairs of polar opposites. The inventory form was one sheet and could be responded to easily in a short amount of time by marking the appropriate blank on the scale. There was a "seven-point range for each item and a midpoint or neutral point if the subject could not be rated toward one or another pole on the scale (Mayo and Thomas, 1978, p. 4)."

Three lead strengths were determined from each of the pairs and one of eight core patterns was specified as the individual's lead strength or most likely core pattern. A second pattern to consider also was indicated.

Thomas (1985) lists the eight patterns as:

Thinking/Practical/Dependent.....I

Thinking/Practical/Independent.....II

Thinking/Theoretical/Dependent.....III

Thinking/Theoretical/Independent.....IV

Risking/Dependent/Practical.....V

Risking/Dependent/Theoretical.....VI

Risking/Independent/Practical.....VII

Risking/Independent/Theoretical.....VIII (p. 33)

Thomas and Thomas (1984) reported that there were four interactive personality forces: core strengths, innate capacities, environment, and freedom to make personal choices. The interaction of these forces shaped personality. The forces exerted varying degrees of influence at various times. According to the Bi/Polar theory, all of these forces had equal status and had to be appreciated and regarded as important when considering lead strengths.

From a demographic data form additional information was obtained. The Bi/Polar instrument and the demographicform were sent to the 60 randomly selected participants (leaders) of this study and to the 80 randomly selected nonparticipants (nonleaders) of this study.

The Bi/Polar instrument was scored by Bi/Polar, Incorporated. The Bi/Polar results along with the demographic information were analyzed using the SPSS (Nie et al., 1983) program in the main frame computer at the

University of Alabama. Statistical analysis was performed by using a t-Test to analyze all data.

Findings

The results of the testing of the hypotheses are related by stating each hypothesis and then discussing the test results.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in thinking and risking strengths for participants and nonparticipants.

No significant difference was found in the thinking and risking strengths of the participants and nonparticipants. The lead strengths of thinking and risking for the participants' group were equally divided into the two strengths with 50% of the participants leading with the thinking strength and 50% of the participants leading with the risking strength. Thomas (1985) reported similar results from his study of effective leaders. Effective leaders were found in both strength areas and Thomas concluded that for growth to occur, there must be a blending of thinking and risking strengths.

In the nonparticipants' group, the majority (58%) led with the thinking strength, but this evidence was not strong enough to produce statistical significance. It did suggest an inclination for nonleaders to be afraid to risk as indicated in the study of Pejza (1982).

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in practical and theoretical thinking strengths for participants and nonparticipants.

There was no significant difference found in the practical and theoretical thinking strengths of the participants and nonparticipants. Both groups strongly led with the lead strength of practical thinking, although practical thinking was more dominant in the nonparticipants' group with 82% leading with the practical thinking strength. Seventy percent of the participants' group led with the practical thinking strength.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in dependent and independent risking strengths of participants and nonparticipants.

No significant difference was found between the participants and nonparticipants in the category of dependent risking and independent risking strengths. There was little difference in the nonparticipants' group with 51% leading the dependent risking strength and 49% leading in the independent risking strength. In the participants' group 59% led with the independent risking strength, which gave slight indication of a willingness of those teachers who had accepted leadership positions to stand by their own convictions and act independently if necessary, as indicated by Mayo and Thomas (1978) from their study. The data also hinted that teachers in leadership roles, in accordance with White's (1959) study, sought challenges and tested their competence. The studies of Miller (1983) and Ewell (1982) also indicated that a leader had feelings of competence and was willing to seek challenges and take independent risks. The finding in this study that participants led with the independent risking strength, although not strongly enough to be statistically significant, was a slight indication of a feeling of competence.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference in thinking and risking strengths for female participants and female nonparticipants.

No significant difference was found in the thinking and risking strengths of the female participants and female nonparticipants. This study did find that 52% of the female participants led with the risking strength, and 57% of the female nonparticipants led with the thinking strength. This was consistent with the finding of Funderburk (1986). In her study of effective principals, she found no association between sex and dependent and

independent risking, but she did find that three out of every four female principals were riskers.

Hypothesis 5: There is no significant difference in thinking and risking strengths of secondary school participants and secondary school nonparticipants.

There was no significant difference found in the thinking and risking strengths of the secondary school participants and the secondary school nonparticipants. Both groups led with the thinking strength, although the thinking strength was stronger in the secondary school participants' group. Seventy-five percent of the secondary school participants led with the thinking strength and 59% of the secondary school nonparticipants led with the thinking strength. These findings related to the participants' group are in contrast to Funderburk's (1986) study. She found that 67% of the secondary principals had the lead strength of risking.

Hypothesis 6: There is no significant difference in thinking and risking strengths of middle school participants and middle school nonparticipants.

No significant difference was found in the thinking and risking strengths of middle school participants and middle school nonparticipants. The dominant lead strength for both groups was risking, although the risking strength was stronger in the nonparticipants' group. Sixty-seven percent of the nonparticipant middle school group had a lead strength of risking, and 56% of the middle school participant group had a lead strength of risking.

Hypothesis 7: There is no significant difference in the dependent and independent risking strengths of elementary school school participants and elementary school nonparticipants.

No significant difference was found between the elementary school participants and elementary school nonparticipants in the category of dependent and independent risking strengths. Fifty-three percent of the elementary school participants led with the dependent risking strength. Sixty-two percent of the elementary school nonparticipants led with the independent risking strength, which indicated a stronger inclination to independent risking than the elementary school participants' group. This finding was consistent with Funderburk's (1986) study of effective elementary school principals. She found 59% of the elementary school principals to be dependent riskers.

Summary

Based upon procedures and instrument used, in all areas investigated, the results of this study failed to indicate that there were statistically significant personality core strength differences in the teachers who served in leadership roles and those who did not choose to serve in these roles. Although not strong enough to be considered statistically significant, lead strength dominance was found in some categories.

The teachers who sought and attained leadership positions had equal scores in the thinking and risking core strengths which indicated that one strength (thinking or risking) was not dominant in this group of leaders. In contrast, Funderburk's (1986) study of effective principals demonstrated that effective principals were riskers. Bredeson (1985) related similar results from his study in which he found that each leader demonstrated leadership behaviors that reflected personal views and strengths and blended these views into an effective leadership approach. Rutherford's (1985) research supported this view indicating that effective leaders exhibited many personality traits, but each leader could be effective if the behaviors were modified to meet

situational demands. Thomas's research (1985) with executives supported the view that thinkers and riskers can be equally effective.

Although no significant difference was found between the leaders and nonleaders when investigating the lead strengths of thinking and risking, it was found that in the nonleaders group the majority (58%) led with the thinking strength. Leading with the thinking strength rather than the risking strength gave slight indication that nonleaders tended to lead by being intellectual, stable, and practical rather than leading by emotions or feelings which could be suggestive of the risking strength. Pejza (1982) found that some did not seek leadership roles because they were afraid to risk and they were not confident of their ability to perform in that role. Choosing not to risk because of lack of confidence in personal ability suggested leading with the thinking strength, practically and analytically, and not taking the risk of acting through emotion.

Both the leaders and nonleaders were practical rather theoretical thinkers. Leading with the practical thinking strength suggested that both groups were more realistic than imaginative and dealt more easily with the concrete than the abstract. Neither group tended to be visionary. Hersey and Blanchard (1982) reported, from a review of McClelland's studies, that persons with achievement motivation set goals and made plans based upon achievable results. Based upon the strong tendency of both groups to lead with the practical thinking strength the evidence inferred a tendency of both leaders and nonleaders to have some level of achievement motivation.

In the area of dependent and independent risking it was found that the leaders (59%) had the lead strength of independent risking, even though no significant difference was found between the two groups, leaders and nonleaders. Perhaps teachers in the leadership group tended to be

self-confident and willing to take risks independent of the action of others. White (1959) and Miller (1983) found in their studies of the competence motive that persons who had a strong competence motive exhibited the characteristic of self-confident, independent action. Thomas (1985) found independent risking to be similar to that competence motive characteristic.

When investigating the female leaders and female nonleaders, once again no significant difference was found between the groups, but the majority (52%) of the female leaders led with the risking strength, while the majority (57%) of the female nonleaders led with the thinking strength. These percentages provided meager indication of the lead strength for either group. In this study, females constituted 87.6% of the total subjects assessed.

Both secondary school leaders and secondary school nonleaders led with the thinking rather than the risking strength, although the tendency toward the thinking strength was stronger in the leader's group. The fact that both groups led with the thinking strength suggested that secondary school leaders and secondary school nonleaders tended to deal with situations logically and analytically rather than dealing with them emotionally. This finding was not consistent with Funderburk's (1986) discovery that 67% of the effective secondary school principals were riskers.

When investigating the thinking and risking strengths of the middle school leaders and middle school nonleaders, it was found that both led with the risking strength. Perhaps leaders and nonleaders at the middle school level preferred to seek challenges and take risks.

At the elementary school level, both leaders and nonleaders were found to be dependent rather than independent riskers. The elementary school nonleaders (63%) tended to be more strongly dependent riskers than the elementary school leaders (53%). Perhaps elementary school leaders and

elementary school nonleaders functioned better in a team situation, in which decisions were made and actions taken based upon group input and the group decision making process.

Bi/Polar Strength Patterns

Pattern	Total Subjects		Participants		Nonparticipants	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
I	23	20	8	16	15	23
II	29	29	14	29	15	23
III	5	4	2	4	3	5
IV	4	4	1	2	3	5
V	14	12	4	8	10	15
VI	11	10	6	12	5	8
VII	22	19	9	18	13	20
VIII	6	5	5	10	1	2
I or II	1	1	0	0	1	1
I or II	1	1	0	0	1	1
I or III	2	2	0	0	2	3
I or V	3	2	1	2	2	3
II or IV	1	1	0	0	1	1
II or VII	3	2	1	2	2	3
III or IV	2	2	1	2	1	1
V or VII	1	1	1	2	0	0
VI or VIII	1	1	1	2	0	0
VII or VIII	1	1	0	0	1	1

An analysis of the Bi/Polar strength patterns revealed that the dominant pattern for the leaders' group was Pattern II, although leaders scored into each pattern. The most infrequent pattern for leaders was Pattern IV. Nonleaders also appeared in each of the eight Bi/Polar strength patterns. The most frequently occurring patterns were Patterns I and II, and the least frequently occurring patterns were Patterns III and IV. In both groups, leaders and nonleaders, Pattern II was a dominant pattern. Pattern IV was the most infrequently occurring pattern for both groups. This finding suggested that the leaders and nonleaders of this study tended to be logical, self-

willed, practical, and disciplined. This finding also indicated that few of the subjects in this study were innovative visionaries.

When investigating the reasons leaders had for applying for a leadership position, it was found that only 45% expressed a strong desire to lead others. In the nonleaders group, only seven percent expressed no interest in a leadership position. A large number of nonleaders (37%) presented statements that indicated a lack of knowledge related to some area of the leadership opportunities.

In summary, the results of this study indicated that there were no significant statistical differences found in the personality core strengths of the leaders and nonleaders in the areas of thinking, risking, practical thinking, theoretical thinking, dependent risking, and independent risking. However, when analyzing the strengths of dependent and independent risking, the leaders evidenced a dominant strength in independent risking. When investigating the thinking and risking strengths, the nonleaders demonstrated a dominant strength in thinking. The female leaders were dominant in the category of risking rather than thinking. The female nonleaders demonstrated a dominant strength in thinking rather than risking.

No differences in the dominant core strengths were demonstrated between the leaders and nonleaders in the area of practical and theoretical thinking. Differences in the dominant core strength were not found between the secondary school leaders and secondary school nonleaders in the area of thinking and risking strengths. Neither were there differences found in relation to a dominant strength found when comparing the lead strengths of thinking and risking of middle school leaders and middle school nonleaders. In addition, no statistically significant difference of dominance of lead strength was

found between elementary school leaders and elementary school nonleaders in the area of dependent and independent risking.

Conclusions

1. No significant personality core strength differences of leaders and nonleaders were revealed through the use of the Bi/Polar Inventory of Core Strengths instrument.

2. Based upon these findings, no conclusive evidence can be stated related to the differences of personality core strengths of leaders and nonleaders.

3. No definitive statements can be made related to the motivation for the pursuit of leadership roles.

References

Bredeson, P. V. (1985). An analysis of the metaphorical perspectives of school principals. Educational Administration Quarterly, 21(1), 29-50.

Cunningham, L. L. (1985). Leaders and leadership: 1985 and beyond. Phi Delta Kappan, 67(1), 17-20.

Ewell, Y. A. (1982). Rethinking leadership models: Perspectives of an associate superintendent in a predominately black subdistrict. Anaheim, CA: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 225 288)

Funderburk, M. W. (1986). A comparative study of Bi/Polar strengths of outstanding elementary and secondary school principals in the United States. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alabama.

Hersey, P. and Blanchard, K. (1982). Management of organizational behavior: Utilizing human resources. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Lee, G. C. (1964). Crusade against ignorance. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Mayo, C. C., and Thomas, J. W. (1978). Manual for the Bi/Polar inventory of strengths. Richardson, Texas: Bi/Polar, Incorporated.

Miller, R. (1983). Your leadership style: A management development module for educational leaders. Washington, D. C.: National Institute of Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 243 232)

Nie, N. H., Hull, C. H., Jenkins, J. H., Steinbrenner, K., and Bent, H. (1983). Statistical package for the social science. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Pejza, J. P. (1982). The high risks of principalship. Momentum, 13(3), 36-38.

Rutherford, P. V. (1985). The competencies of leadership. Training and Development Journal, 38 (8), 14-19.

Thomas, J. W. (1985). Bi/Polar . . . Understanding people through strengths. Richardson, Texas: BI/POLAR, Incorporated.

Thomas, J. W., and Thomas T. J. (1984). Interpretive materials for the Bi/Polar analysis of core strengths. Richardson, Texas: Bi/Polar, Incorporated.

White, R. W. (1959). Motivation: the concept of competence. Psychological Review, 66(5), 297-333.